CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND ITS FUTURE

G. A. JOHNSTON ROSS

IT is time, in the judgment of Dr. Ross, for a careful reconsideration of the question of public worship. As at present conducted in many churches it would seem to be "loosely hung, desultory, inchoate, lacking in dramatic construction, in climax and dénouement," while it should be characterized by "orderliness, dignity, impressiveness," if it is to fulfill its highest purposes. In these lectures he discusses the questions involved from various aspects; asks what worship really is; measures the dimensions of Christian worship; considers its background; and concludes with a plea for the setting up of "a supernational, superlingual and superdenominational form of service for the expression and stimulation of that movement of the collective human soul in self-oblation which is the central response to the great objective fact of divine Grace."

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/christianworship0000gajo

The Merrick Lectures for 1926

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND ITS FUTURE

Five Lectures Delivered at
OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

by

G. A. JOHNSTON ROSS

LIBRARY OF
Bonebrake Theological Seminary
BV
70
.R677
1927.
7,882

THE ABINGDON PRESS
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

Copyright, 1927, by
G. A. JOHNSTON ROSS

All rights reserved, including that of translation into
foreign languages, including the Scandinavian

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

PREFACE 5

LECTURE I. THE PRESENT SITUATION: WHAT IS WORSHIP?... 7

LECTURE II. THE DIMENSIONS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.. 25

LECTURE III. THE DIMENSIONS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP (Concluded) 46

LECTURE IV. THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP OF TO-DAY 67

LECTURE V. THE WORSHIP OF TO-MORROW 84

PREFACE

By the terms of their foundation the Merrick Lectures for undergraduates in Ohio Wesleyan University must be published after their oral delivery. Accordingly, these discourses, with little change, are here presented to the public.

The author is deeply conscious of the incompleteness of what he has written. Yet if the problem of the right organization of Christian Worship is to come even one step nearer to a right solution, must not somebody first spread out some of the aspects of the subject which lie between the prolegomena and general principles of the philosopher on the one hand and the definite program of the reforming organizer on the other? This, at least, is what these elementary lectures have attempted to do.

G. A. J. R.

LECTURE I

THE PRESENT SITUATION: WHAT IS WORSHIP?

I HAVE chosen for these Lectures the subject of Christian worship: a topic which could not be exhaustively treated in fifty lectures and can only be glanced at in five.

On the very threshold, therefore, I must make clear the limitations which I have set myself to observe. To begin with, I design by these lectures to serve a practical and not an academic interest. Therefore there will be no display of borrowed learning. In particular, there will be no philosophic discussion of the difficulties which have been created for worship by the judgments of students of science. I shall proceed on the assumption that worship is an instinct in men, irrepressible and claiming direction and guidance; an impulse to which, upon the whole, it has been profitable for men to yield.

Further, by "worship" I shall mean in the

main corporate public Christian worship. I shall require, of course, to start from private prayer and even from pre-Christian prayer. But my chief aim (though I shall hardly reach it till my last lecture) is to point to some of the problems confronting *organized, collective worship:* not the problem of the devotional attitude but of its "cultural" expression.

I regret that I must observe two further limitations: (1) I must leave out the fascinating and difficult subject of worship for children and confine myself to the subject of adult worship; and (2) because of personal disability I must remain silent on the subject of music.

To those who are concerned about the future of religion in this land and throughout the world one of the most startling of post-war phenomena is the surging up, over a wide area, of a desire to reconsider the question of public worship.

In this country the tide of feeling is, under one aspect, a complaint against the inadequacy and inefficiency of present methods, conspicuously in nonliturgical churches. Only rarely, it would appear, does public

prayer as at present conducted arrest or satisfy; very frequently it shocks rather than assists to expression the instinct of reverence. Less pronounced perhaps but very real is the disappointment with public worship as loosely hung, desultory, inchoate, lacking in dramatic construction, in climax, and dénouement.

Under another, more positive, aspect, the movement is a yearning for beauty, a desire for orderliness, dignity, impressiveness. Under this aspect the stir is no doubt part of a larger body of aspiration and is found in connection with many forms of institutional life. It has for years been showing itself, for example, with increasing volume in the academic world—in the pursuit of the impressive in academic dress, processions, and so forth. Doubtless the movement is linked with the more prominent place given in education to art, and perhaps to dramatics and pageantry; and with the growing appreciation throughout the country of artistic form, as manifested in the lovely shape often now given (in no part of the country more conspicuously than in the West) to public buildings; not churches only, but railroad sta-

tions, post offices, and schools. Our Negro fellow citizens, always credited with the love of music, but also with somewhat ill-regulated freedom of feeling in their religious services, are sharing in the general trend. I have nowhere seen more stately, ornate, orderly, artistically organized and reverent worship than in a great Negro church in New York City.

A movement of this sort among the American people is doubtless welcome as indicating a certain advance in artistic culture; but it will be watched with concern by those whose instinct it is to dread formalism in orderly form, and the loss of spirituality in attention to beauty of arrangement and expression; and it will also be a matter of concern to those friends of the American people who recognize the nation's rich emotional endowment but note the defective sense of history which alone can keep that emotional impulse in check and under wise control.

This movement in America has its counterpart in Europe. Professor Will, of Strasbourg, in his book *Le Culte*—one of the two most massive publications recently is-

sued in Europe on the subject of worship—tells us that in Europe many faithful evangelicals are demanding a free and harmonious expansion of all the worshipful instincts with a reduction of the quantity of preaching, and an increase in the elements of adoration. He instances the introduction by Amiguet of Lausanne of certain mystical devotions; liturgical projects in the churches of Geneva and in the Reformed Churches of France; a liturgical movement among the Lutherans of Paris "to accentuate worshipful adoration"; a High Church movement in Prussia designed especially to emphasize reverent awe: the founding in Stuttgart of a Christian Community whose ambition it is actually by means of a new type of worship to effect *"une veritable renaissance de toute notre culture déséquilibrée"*—a worship which, it is hoped, will produce a better understanding of the unity between nature and the spiritual world and will help to transform our world till it becomes a real body for the Lord Who is Spirit. "This worship will let us see Nature penetrated by spirit and spirit organizing nature without abatement of her sovereign rights. The idea

is to concretize spiritual things and to spiritualize the data of the sensible world."[1]

Perhaps the best known and the most daring of all these experiments is that which is being made at the King's Weigh House (Congregational) Church, London, by my friend Dr. W. E. Orchard. Since the Reformation probably no non-Roman Catholic has ever dared to take over and use so much of the Roman discipline in worship as has this brilliant young Englishman, born an Anglican, educated in the Presbyterian Church, and now ministering in a Congregational church.

It would, however, be a misrepresentation to describe this stirring of interest in worship as uniformly a desire for ornate accompaniments of worship or for what is sometimes called, in a question-begging way, the "enrichment of the service."

As a matter of fact, the malaise and discontent sometimes take the opposite form of a desire to simplify existing forms and to

---

[1] Le Culte *Prolégomènes*, p. 2. NOTE; With all this compare the opening chapter of Heiler's *The Spirit of Worship*. "Throughout the whole of Christendom there is to-day a liturgical movement."

reduce to a healing silence the unpunctuated garrulity of many of our services of worship. Attention, unprecedentedly inquiring and acute, is being turned upon such things as the use which the Society of Friends has made of what is sometimes called the Sacrament of Silence: and in the Catholic Church more use than ever is being made of silent adoration, especially "before" certain sacred objects such as the Holy Eucharist, pictures and statues of sacred persons, and so on.

Here, then, is a widespread supernational superdenominational movement for the building up of a right organization of that act of worship which Sabatier has called "the very soul of religion." The old objection to forms and the old devotion to forms are both breaking down. People are beginning to feel the truth of the Quaker dictum, "Pure worship under the Gospel stands neither in forms nor in the formal disuse of forms." We must get behind these external matters, freeing ourselves as far as possible from prejudice and from an obstinate opposition to change, if we are to take an intelligently co-operative part in this quest for an ideal organization of worship—a

quest which I cannot but feel is being laid upon us by the Spirit of God. For this yearning for more effective worship attaches itself to some of the most hopeful instincts of our time.

(*a*) It is, for example, part of the widespread craving in many departments of life for Reality. Here is the way in which the movement is described by a Canadian reviewer of Dean Sperry's remarkable work *Reality in Worship:* "On this continent," he says, "where nonliturgical services are in the ascendant, there is a growing feeling among close observers in the pew as well as in the pulpit that the time is ripe, not only for a more dignified and orderly service of public worship, but especially for a strong impression of truthfulness and sincerity in its total effect."[1]

The movement thus demands our respect when we see it as part of that passion for the Real which is one of the precious blessings of our so piebald postwar experience. It expresses itself in a hundred ways, some of them worthy, some unworthy. It expresses

[1] *Canadian Journal of Religious Thought,* January-February 1926, p. 80.

itself, for example, in a new impatience with mere oratory in public life and even in some of the corybantic madnesses of young people in social life. It expresses itself in the passion for scientific truth and in the impatience with hypocrisy. We should be profoundly thankful that in all this craving for Reality there is found the desire for the real in worship.

(*b*) The movement also is stimulated by the longing for what I can only call universality. Indeed, Dean Sperry expressly defines social worship as "the affirmation in significant forms of the Universal Reality which haunts our private particulars in religion." This stretching after universality is the inevitable pose of a spatially collapsed world. Men want to find a satisfactory internationalism in politics; are studying earnestly methods and principles of church reunion; are searching for elements which will be found to underlie all religions; are groping after the harmonization of different segments of life, for example, science and religion, art and religion, and the like; and are now so contemplating what is called the "individual" and the "social gospel" that the

two, as Professor Coe has said, tend to fuse into one process. It is this habit that lies under the present desire to break through the ecclesiastical and other frontiers in the established modes of worship and seek (to use again Doctor Will's expression) "an expansion of all the worshipful instincts."

(*c*) And in the third place I believe there lies behind this movement for better worship a yearning for the lost bliss of sacrifice. Hedonism, the race for the pleasures of sensation, never did and never will satisfy humanity, and I believe that deep down in the human heart is a craving for self-rededication.

That self-dedication is, as we shall see, one of the two foci around which the ellipse of worship revolves; and men are trying to find through worship a way of expressing this longing to give themselves to a cause or person big enough to engulf and use every power they possess.

The Mass consummates itself in a great transaction of sacrifice; it is this that has given Catholicism its tremendous postwar prestige, especially in Europe, whose Protestantism, like our own, has never found an

adequate method of expressing and releasing this sacrificial desire that is our own most royal human endowment.

All of us desire to see a stirring of the hearts of men Godward and the running of many into his kingdom. We may not care for the word "revival," which has now acquired a semitechnical meaning and has associations that are distasteful; but we do crave an increase in the numbers of men and women seeking the way to Zion. May it not be that the church is being bidden by her Master to re-examine the matter of worship as a preparation for such a revival?

It would appear, then, to be part of our Christian duty to rethink this subject through in preparation for work to which God may presently summon us.

Unhappily we cannot in any strict sense "think the subject through." "The problem of the right organization of worship," says Professor Will, and few words have ever proved more comforting to me, "is insoluble." One tries and tries to think through, and every time one comes to a tunnel of

darkness. Worship, the communion of the finite man with the eternal and infinite God, seems to be built on a foundation of antinomies and paradoxes which the wit of man cannot resolve—paradoxes such as these: the paradox of surrender and appropriation; the paradox of publicity and privacy; the paradox of discipline and spontaneity; the paradox of interior meditation and of the contemplation of God in his works in the external world.

But let us at least make a beginning by trying to define terms.

What is social Christian worship as we know it?

When we try to answer this question our instinct is to begin with that craving for God, which despite all bafflement and denial, is so characteristic of the individuals of our race. I know that historically a consciousness of a separate and distinct individuality as worshiper may have come relatively late; and that it may be true that chronologically the worshiping society may have preceded the worshiping individual conscious for himself of an individual relation to his own God.

But, as a matter of fact, we cannot work ourselves back into the mental attitude of persons constituting a religious unit but each one imperfectly individualized. Hence we must begin with the single worshiper and the craving in his heart.

That craving disguises itself under many forms: as intellectual curiosity (though, as a matter of fact, thought will never alone satisfy it, it is far more than a hunger of mind for mind or of thought for thought); as obedience to a duty (though the very dissatisfaction which accompanies all incidental observances is proof that it is not an adjustment to law that is craved but a more comprehensive adjustment of the whole human personality to a totality without, which is not exhausted in law or incident but must include personality): and sometimes the craving is just a restlessness without a name —its very namelessness the witness that its objective is He of the Ineffable Name. This craving, then, is essentially a desire that the total life within us shall come into empowering contact with the Life conceived to be without and above us—the Life which we recognize as the original of our being, the

personal background of our existence, the source of our obligations and the home of our heart. I say it is to this craving that we instinctively turn as the explanation of the origin of worship.

But when we further think of this craving, of the fact that it is so widespread—that, varying infinitely in external expression, it is yet everywhere so essentially one at its core—that we did not originate it, and can neither summon, wholly control, nor dismiss it, it becomes plain that we must seek for the origin of this craving outside us in the very Life after which we yearn. That means that there is a craving of God for us, not less than and, indeed, prior to our craving for him; that worship is born of a double movement, a movement from heaven downward and a movement from earth upward, of inspiration and aspiration; the two movements constituting the systole and diastole of its throbbing heart.[1]

Worship, then, in the individual, is not prayerful monologue but real and reciprocal dialogue, the stir of a Divine Heart making

[1] "A Mutual and Reciprocal Correspondence."—*Clement o Alexandria.*

itself felt within a man, the Divine Mind making itself heard and in some measure understood; and of the human mind, heart and soul responding to that Divine stir.

When one looks at individual worship thus and tries to realize how many individuals the world over have worshiped, one obtains a tremendously impressive view of God and of his patience. We see him behind the faintest beginnings of human aspiration, with incredible self-restraint and (if I dare be bold) self-effacement inwreathing divine suggestion in the very fiber of the human mind, replenishing the vessels of desire, and undergirding and re-enforcing the will to prayer; and carrying on this patient work for generation after generation in face of the thousand opposing forces that play upon and originate in the human heart. It is a conception of God which makes an ineffaceable mark on one, and carries within itself, within its very majesty, the attestation of its truth. Nor is the view which one gets of his fellow men from this point of sight less profoundly touching. I have never been to India, par excellence the land of worship. But I shall never forget watching at a re-

spectful, and, I hope, not a prying, distance the devotions of a Japanese woman in a Buddhist temple in Kobe. Of her agonized sincerity there was possible no more doubt than of one's existence. As I watched her I remembered my Scottish mother's word to me as a little boy, "Never despise the gathering together of people for worship." I saw behind that Japanese woman the aspirant soul of the race. What a history it is! Could it all, this stretching of the human heart, this ache for the "something more" than our imprisoned, amputated life affords—could it possibly be illusory and frustrate? To think of our fellow men as individual worshipers is to love them, to believe in them, and to hope great things for them.

But, now, if this is individual worship, what is social worship? It is, of course, the sum of a number of such individual dialogues with the Eternal. But it is a great deal more than this. When social worship is organized, and "two or three" come together in one Blessed Name, there is then a great deal more than mere physical contiguity and numerical addition; there are

currents of mutual influence modifying the processes if not of individual thought, at least of individual desire, and tending to build the company of worshipers into a compact solidarity, one body of aspiration and of appropriation, of self-offering and of the welcome of "grace." Hence social worship may be described, ideally, as *that corporate devotion, finding its climax in sacrifice, which is offered, not by contiguous units only; but by a group of persons made compact and "of one mind" by the play of one Spirit on individual spirits inclining themselves toward him; and capable, when thus unified in desire, of wider vision and more complete self-oblation and communion with God than the individuals composing the group by themselves could be.*

Such, then, is social Christian worship in its central idea.

Behind it lie four assumptions, or, rather, it operates in four dimensions:

1. God.
2. The will of the individual worshiper.
3. The worshiping community.
4. The world of men and things: the objective world of which human worshipers

form a part and which is entangled in and affected by the aspirations of individuals and groups.

Before we even try to raise questions as to the right organization of worship it will be well to look a little more closely at the quadrilateral within which worship operates.

LECTURE II

THE DIMENSIONS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

I. The first of the dimensions within which worship operates is God. "Worship," says Sperry, "is the adoration of God, the assumption of supreme worth to God, and the manifestation of reverence in the presence of God."[1] "Religious worship," says the *Westminster Confession of Faith,* "is to be given unto God, and to him alone": and I can well understand the rise in our minds of a puzzled resentment against the very suggestion of other dimensions of worship than this one. But I think we shall later see that the suggestion is justified and does not intrude upon the primacy of the thought that prayer is directed to God.

The idea of God is in notoriously unstable equilibrium in our minds: and the scientist, the philosopher, and the devout worshiper do not emphasize the same aspects of the

[1] Sperry, *Reality in Worship,* p. 164.

idea. To the theistic scientist, "God" may mean the unification in one conscious mind of the powers that act upon us for good; to the philosopher, "God" is likely to signify an Ultimate Reality in whom cohere the ideals that press upon us for realization. But these notions of God are not sufficient for and not always relevant to the needs of the worshiper. "I cannot pray," says Dr. H. R. Mackintosh, "to a Being who is Mind in general without being a mind: to one who is merely the aggregate of the individual minds. I cannot pray to a logical 'Universal' inherent in all things but without consciousness, without purpose, without ethical character of any kind. I cannot pray to a Higher 'Unity' which underlies mind and matter, without being exactly either; nor to the abstract rationality of things; nor to a general name of the laws of nature. The 'God' of actually operative, contagious, and missionary religious faith is one who thinks and feels and wills and loves."

In other words, whatever else God may be —and who can find out the Almighty to perfection?—he must be at least personal, capable, that is, of entering into valid personal

relations with us. True worshipers will, of course, not forget that we know but the outskirts of his ways and hear but a faint whisper of his power. They will not forget that the very function of worship (as under one aspect it is the very purpose of life itself) is to call to our minds and to help us explore the unexplored residua of truth and love and power that are in God. The true worshiper will not forget that one sins against *life itself* if one rests satisfied with a static and inelastic thought of God, and that the essence of idolatry lies within a reprehensible stagnation in our conception of him, for a Deity limited and bounded by the graven images of the mind is essentially an "idol" and not the true God. But, on the other hand, the day is past when intelligent worshipers can be terrified by the charge of what is called "anthropomorphism." A book has recently been published and widely advertised as bold and courageous and liberating, because the author has discovered that most people, when they think of God, picture him as a venerable old man white with the dignities of age. Why not? We are children of a larger growth, with imagina-

tions limited by what we have seen and experienced; and names, and figures appearing before the eyes of the mind, and figures of speech, are all so many mechanisms whose destiny, as Count Keyserling has reminded us, is to become the "unconsidered alphabet of life."[1]

We need not fear, then, to visualize to ourselves as best we may the personal God, so long as we remember that he is personal and an unknown ocean more.

And what is true of the Being of the God we worship is true also of his character. Worship is meaningless if it be not addressed to a God whose character is known. It is this truth that lies behind the French scholar's simple but profound paradox, *"Pour bien prier, il faut déjà avoir prié."*[2] God must be to the worshiper trustworthy—the outline of his character known. The vast reaches of that character, its illimitable insights and implicates, the immeasurable elevation of its point of view and of its comprehensiveness—all this, which is suggested by the word "holy," the worshiper ought not

[1] Compare Streeter, *Reality*, pp. 102, 133.

[2] *Will*, p. 209.

to forget, and the organization of public worship should stimulate him to remember: for the recollection of that boundless ineffable Remainder in God which our most daring approaches leave unexplored is the very foundation of the reverence which should be the ground tone of human worship. But, with all this in mind, we must nevertheless insist that the God of worship be a God recognizable by certain qualities, aspects of character that command our trust.

And these aspects, after all, are only two: that he be consistently faithful to himself, as righteousness; and, secondly, that he be friendly to us and accessible. These are the two aspects of the Divine Character most stressed in the Bible, and notably in that great treasure house of words for worship, the book of Psalms. The theme of the tiniest of all the psalms—the one hundred and seventeenth—is just this twofold aspect of Deity. "Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness [Chesedh] is great toward us: and the truth [Emeth] of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord."

The two aspects of Deity are nowhere in

the Bible satisfactorily harmonized except in the person of Jesus Christ, of whom it is said that "grace [which is Chesedh] and truth" came—that is, were realized—"in him." And the peculiar place which Christ occupies in the Christian cultus no doubt rests in part on this unique feature of his self-presentation: that he combines the tender accessibility of a human friend with an awe-inspiring holiness such as we attribute to the Supreme: and so appeals to that double craving for sympathy and control which lies at the back of so much of our worship. The God of worship, then, must be at least the *righteous* God and the friendly—"a just God and a Saviour."

Worship is, in the first place, then, the quest of right relations with God thus conceived. In its most rudimentary and undifferentiated form such worship is fittingly inarticulate; the silent prostration of the souls of men before the Divine Majesty, that Majesty whose friendliness is as silencing in its wonder as his Holiness.

If primitive man was inarticulate in worship, the inarticulateness survives here. Ar-

ticulate utterance is superimposed upon that silence, but never supersedes it. There is a silence at both ends of worship, if I may put it thus: there is that in me, in us, which we cannot express in worship: and there is that in God to which utterance cannot reach. *That background of the inarticulate should never be forgotten when we think of the problems of organizing worship,* for tremendous harm has been done and is being done (in the direction of making trivial the range of our devotion) by the identification of religion with the articulate.

The first of the forms taken by articulate worship of God is usually called adoration. It is that expression of awe-struck appreciation of the greatness and glory of God which has not yet become conscious thankfulness or differentiated itself into, say, a sense of enshelterment in God. If any act of worship can be described as "intransitive," as "serving no other end than to give outward form or body to its feelings toward the Divine," it is the act of adoration. This aspect of worship, so pronounced in the New Testament and in the echoes to be found

there of the liturgical use of the early church, has been disgracefully neglected in our Protestant nonliturgical churches, and some of the movements for the revision of methods of worship which I mentioned in my opening lecture, declare themselves to have this as their specific aim, that they shall "give to the element of adoration a preponderant place" in the offices of worship. The Jewish worship, less psalmodic than ours, has retained more solemn expression of the attitude of adoration: and when the contributions of the Holy Orthodox Churches to the fullness of Christian cultus and life have been fully appraised it will be seen that they are fitted to be our teachers in the art and discipline of adoration: and we may discover that a cultus duly organized fittingly to express adoration may do more than carefully build up theological exactitude to maintain a lofty and worthy and expanding conception of God.

But close to adoration comes thanksgiving: the appreciation of what God is passes quickly over into praise for his outgoing gifts. Thanksgiving would seem to be a somewhat late arrival among items of the

cultus the world over. Many tribes have been discovered who possess in their own language no equivalent for "Thank you"; and the fact that our children have to be taught to express thanks shows that there are atavistic tendencies to ingratitude still at work in the race.

And yet thanksgiving is an aspect of worship which more readily justifies itself than almost any other. Plainly we are derived persons; the bounties by which we are daily surrounded are neither deserved nor self-originated: we owe a debt to Some One; to some, possibly anonymous, Power beyond the things we see. We need pass no judgment on the nature and character of that Power before we give thanks, excepting that we recognize that we have no proof that that Power is unconscious of us and of its gifts to us. That lack of proof gives us liberty to proceed and even lays on us obligation to proceed with our thanksgiving: and we need no more than this, although as our thanksgiving proceeds, we may learn more and more about that Power to whom our grateful homage is due.

But now this recognition of our indebted-

ness to God breaks into two most diverse and yet mutually complementary moods of worship. First, a sense of contrast between ourselves and the Power we adore. If that Power be conceived specially in terms of force and authority, the sense of contrast will emphasize to men their own weakness, their isolation, their ignorance. If the Supreme Power be conceived chiefly in terms of moral qualities, of righteousness and love, the sense of contrast will be moral, and should issue in an aching sense, if not of sin, at least of moral inadequacy and impotence, and in confession of this, and in cries for cleansing and empowerment.

Yet, secondly, over against this self-abasement there is the clamant demand for affirmation of one's essential oneness with God, of appreciation of the justice of his mind and of approval of his law, and of one's desire to range oneself with that law. That "affirmation principle" in worship has also, I fear, been falling into neglect among us, overshadowed no doubt in part by the emphasis in Protestant churches on the confession of sin, and pushed aside also perhaps by the misuse of creeds or a growing sense

of the unsuitability of the historic creeds to this particular design.

I am convinced that we need to recover this element of united affirmation in our social worship. It may be true (I shall not discuss that matter now) that the historic creeds present too many difficulties to many minds to allow them effectively to present before God the united affirmation on the part of his people of oneness of purpose with himself, his will and design. The suggestion of even shorter formulas than the Apostles' Creed has been made. The late Doctor Denney, for example, suggested this: "I believe in God through Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord and Saviour." Professor Baillie, of Auburn, has probably improved upon that formula by this: "I put my trust in the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ our Lord." The sentence, however, expresses rather dependence than a co-operative and approving will: and the same objection holds against a feature of Buddhist worship which nevertheless I have found deeply moving. At the climax of the service the worshipers say in unison three times over: "I clothe myself safely round with in-

finite love and wisdom." Perhaps the Christian Church has made a blunder in discontinuing the use of the *Shema:* "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God: and thou shalt love the Lord with all thy strength and with all thy heart"; and the resumption of its use in Christian worship might further, along lines that involve no surrender of principle, the entente happily emerging between Israel and the followers of Jesus.

And, finally, these acts of adoration, and thanksgiving, and confession, and affirmation of faith all should come to culmination (in social worship) in an act of corporate self-devotion.

In certain of the ancient Mysteries we are told that the mysta, or worshiper, having been admitted to the sight of some symbol or symbolic action which in some way unknown to us (for the rites were secret) seems to have illustrated what we should call the law of life, made expression of his own personal subscription to and approval of that law by saying, "I am thou, and thou art I." But a procedure of that sort fell far short of Christian worship in at least two ways: first it was an individual act only,

and not an act in which one joined with one's brethren regarded as one body of aspiration; and, secondly, as there lay behind it no conception of a God with a will or purpose, it fell short of an offering of the self for co-operative share in the fulfillment of the divine purpose. This, per contra, is the climax of Christian worship—when the whole body of worshipers, built into a compact body of desire and intention by devotional acts, offers itself as one, for the carrying out of God's holy designs in the world.

II. The Individual Worshiper

Worship is, inferentially, an opportunity for the receiving of grace, as well as for rendering homage to God. The very act of self-prostration before the Divine Majesty involves the desire for the maintenance of a satisfying relation to the Supreme and for gifts of grace which may confirm that relation. No doubt, the quest of boons for oneself, even in spiritual matters, may have lurking within it the poison of selfishness, but not necessarily; and our conception of social worship cannot be complete until we pass in review some of the more notable of

the blessings of which men have been most conscious as they have come together to worship God.

1. To begin with, there is the broadening of the soul's horizon. The daily work of most of us is done within a very narrow circle of interest and enterprise, and the discipline of that limitation, though often hard, is, we recognize, salutary. But when we come together to worship, we have a unique opportunity to emerge from these limitations and move within wider horizons. The bounds of our life are pressed back, and its thraldoms set behind us: we see ourselves in wider relationship and larger prospects; we come, if we will, into a place of liberty. When public worship is not vitiated by the parochial and exclusive spirit, this enlarging of the area of the vision of the mind can scarcely be missed.

I traveled once in Scotland with a little African girl who had been rescued from death in the West African forest. She had never seen long distances, and on board the ship had been continuously ill and confined to her berth. I noticed as she sat opposite to me in the train that when we passed

through dark woods she veiled her eyes; when the train came out of the woods and skirted the edge of a broad valley, her eyes opened wide and it seemed as though she could not satisfy her eagerness to see: *she was resting her eyes on wide horizons.* So in common worship, as nowhere else, we can see the land of far distances, the true home of our spirit.

I have called social prayer a unique opportunity for this expansion of horizon. I do not question the value of other methods of escape from the constricted dreariness of imprisoned lives, whether they be methods of nature or of art. But Christian worship carries us, as these things do not, unto the presence not only of the Supreme himself, but of those ideals which coming from him press in upon us. And this is why the regularity of the return of the opportunity is of the essence of its value: otherwise the impact of these ideals and extensive hopes might tend only to impatience and rebellion and not to the quieting and fortification of our feeling and will.

2. For just because when we come together with other fellow aspirants we know

ourselves, like them, children of the Eternal, there steals over our spirit a deep tranquilization. The nervous tension of the busy servile days relaxes and in that bath of relaxation our energies are renewed. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee" is the expression in outward life of that calm which common worship is designed to induce as preparation for the stress of life. It is to be remembered that half the testimony of the church on the matter of tranquilization is and must be dumb. But many of us are willing to testify that in common worship we have been again and again brought out of storms into a haven of peace.

When the soul of Gerontius awoke from death's sleep and found itself in the unseen world, its first thought was, "How still it is!" It is a holy commonplace of worshiping experience thus to be introduced into an eternal order where tranquillity reigns, and to return to the conflicts of life fortified by that ordered peace.

3. And this composure of spirit is no vacuous lethargy of the mind, though for a little while in healing silence it may well be

just that. There is real mental enlargement within it.

The psalm of a perplexed mind of long ago says this: "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went unto the sanctuary of God; then understood I" (Psa. 73. 16-17).

The testimony of many, many worshipers could readily be given to their experience that in common worship perplexities do drop away and the solution of many problems is found; not perhaps always the problems with which the world supposes us to be concerned. For underneath the stream of questions with which we are daily called upon to deal in our business or professional life, there runs a subterranean current of thought—fragmentary, irregular, ineffective; guesses and reasonings; half finished, because the loud world called. It is these inner questionings that are so often resolved in worship. Moods that had puzzled us are seen mirrored in some hymn or Scripture and are at least no longer a distressing isolation; controversies of the conscience are reduced to simplicity and dissolve before the broad and plain morality of the gospel; forgotten

factors in disquieting situations emerge as we begin to see life *sub specie æternitatis.* All this means intellectual refreshment—a real "renewing of the mind."

4. And, of course, there is spiritual enlargement too. Have you ever gone to church, and even as you sat waiting for the service to begin, been smitten to sudden shame, and forced to shed some mood of hardness or egoism, or vindictiveness, or unworthy purpose? That happens all the time; even before what we call the "exercises" of worship begin, men's souls are restored, and their hearts come to them again as the heart of a little child. The sight of other faces, seen not now as neighbors merely (still less as competitors), but as fellow aspirants and sharers in a common need; the mental vision of the holy dead our predecessors in this unresting quest for God, themselves now added to the apparatus of moral appeal; the tones of the Holy Scripture, that amazing literature which gathers all life around the moral idea, mirroring as the reproach of Divine Solicitude the processes of conscience, and interpreting life in terms of a sin-hating and sin-grieved Love;

the resummoning before the mind of the Christ in whom that love is incarnated—all these combine to effect the renewal of the right spirit within us, the fanning of the sweeter emotions to a glowing heat, making the stiff and viscous stream of reverent feeling run in swift and easy flow.

5. How can one adequately speak of the effect of public worship in the healing of those wounds of sorrow which often so obstinately refuse to heal? All survivors of bereavement know that they have a double need and double problem. On the one hand, they feel the need for relief in some expression of their surcharged hearts. They know the poignant truth of the words:

> "Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
> Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break."

Yet on the other hand, the longer they live with their sorrow, the better they realize the incommunicable core, and the need for silence, "the heart knowing its own bitterness." Now, this difficulty is resolved in common worship as nowhere else. For there solitude and fellowship mysteriously blend;

in its voices is heard a confidential explicitness which yet is veiled in the expression of the general mind, and the bereaved heart enjoys at once the support of a sympathetic fellowship and the blessed relaxation of a comforted solitude.

6. And all these spiritual enlargements center in that perpetual miracle of the church—the rediscovery and acceptance of forgiveness; the breaking down of the soul in penitence, the acquiescence in God's judgment of its sin; the shamed recognition that God himself bears by far the major part of the grief of the sin; the sight of that grieved love in Christ; the acceptance of God's patient welcome and the re-entrance upon a life of grateful moral endeavor—this which I have called the perpetual miracle of the church, is the spiritual mystery enacted in many honest and good hearts when they come together to worship God.

7. And all these boons are gathered in one in that sense of *enswathement in God* of which mystics have spoken in glowing terms, but which even the most pedestrian and tongue-tied Christians have known. The God who had at the first summoned them to

worship and created within them the desire for him, himself seems to descend and raise the worshiper for the moment into that Eternal Order he has been made to seek: the church around him, with the worshiping fellowship of his brethren of whom he is only half conscious because the paradox of the blending of publicity and solitude is of the essence of the social cultus, the church becomes to him "filled with the divine glory, the house of God and the very gate of heaven."

It is easy, let me add, to say that in actual practice social worship falls far short of results like these; yet we cannot estimate the institution aright, nor have right thoughts of its true organization unless we look on it thus in its ideal, an ideal happily often, even among persons of slender intellectual equipment, gratefully and reverently realized.

LECTURE III

THE DIMENSIONS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

(CONCLUDED)

We have so far considered two of the four dimensions within which common worship moves: God and the individual worshiping spirit.

But there are very real ends of worship that have in view two other elements of the situation: our fellow-worshipers and that external world of which they and we form a part, and which in the end worship is designed also to affect.

III. The Worshiping Community

In a book in which I have found much help, public Christian worship is frequently called "a gesture of Christian solidarity," an assertion of the existence of a common, collective faith.

The hyperindividualism of our modern viewpoint has obscured from us some of the values of collective acts of devotion. In an-

cient times, and especially in ancient Israel, God and his people made up together a unit of covenanted love, and the share of each individual in that covenant was dependent on his right to membership among the people of God. Each individual had his duty in the combination, and few things in the history of ethics are more interesting than this: that in Hebrew there is one word which is used of the individual's relation to God, of the same individual's relation to his neighbor, and, most startling of all, of God's relation to both. The word is *Chesedh:* if it has any one meaning, it is that of "respectful ministrant love." That word describes how God loves us, how we are to love him, and how we are to love one another. It is surely an echo of this idea that is found in Paul's word, "love is the bond of perfectness, the link of the perfect life" (see Col. 3. 14).

One of the disastrous results of the fading of this idea from the popular mind is that we have fallen into the delusion that the brotherhood of man can be secured by political rearrangement or by ethical teaching alone. As a matter of fact, the evidence is abundant that a world-wide human sense of brother-

hood waits upon a world-wide human sense of sonship to God; and this is the consistent biblical view. But this means that we are drawn nearest to our brethren, most moved to high and kindly thought of them when we view them as fellow aspirants. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, in one of the very few passages of Scripture in which regularity of churchgoing is commended, we are bidden "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." That is, literally, "with a view to (or with the result of) a paroxysm of love and noble conduct" (see Heb. 10. 24). The full truth is that the contemplation of others around us as fellow-worshipers effects the repression of unworthy feeling toward them or estimate of them, while, on the other hand, as the glow of kindlier feeling comes upon us we are conscious of the release within us of a happy impulse to worship.

This reciprocal action between love and adoration introduces us to some of the most remarkable values of social worship. Have we, for example, fully realized the value and dignity of intercession? Intercession is perhaps the highest prerogative of redeemed

human nature possible here on earth. It is the reference to God of the best and most unselfish wishes we can cherish for our friends. It is the association of ourselves with the multiform needs of humanity; and to engage in it is to steep ourselves in sympathetic feeling ever freshly renewed for the sorrows and sufferings of mankind. Inferentially, the exercise must lead us to a realization of the compassion of God, and it must therefore constitute a regulator and balancer of our conception of God, and keep us true to the heart of the Christian conception of the Divine. I have often wondered whether it can honestly be said that the Protestant churches have made all they might make of this exercise. Can it really be safely left to the extemporaneous speech of one man, to guide an exercise so varied and wide-reaching? The late Dr. John Watson, of Liverpool, though ministering to a nonliturgical church, found in practice that his people demanded that his intercessory prayer, which he had built up with very great care, be used Sunday after Sunday without change, and that, not because they were liturgically inclined but because they

dreaded lest petitions which had specially stirred their responsive feeling should be omitted. One such petition was for the insane, for those who (to quote the words of the prayer) had "lost the kindly light of reason." I have heard from the lips of Doctor Watson himself, and from the lips of his people, of the almost jealous tenacity with which his fellow-worshipers held on to this petition, and of the disappointment they felt when any minister occupying that pulpit left it out. Especially I think should we keep in mind that young clergymen are not always men of broad sympathies, for an even warmth of sympathy spread over a wide area is the resultant of many disciplines in life with which we cannot expect young lives to be familiar. For their guidance in particular, I feel there should be provided models and molds of intercessory prayer.

But public worship is far, far more than a gesture of solidarity among the persons composing the particular local group of worshipers. That group needs to be reminded that it is but a fragment and local representative of a great worshiping host, of whom a part is now upon the earth, but a larger

part is worshiping in the courts of heaven. Without the thought of that vast entourage both in earth and in heaven, the conception of the significance and dignity of a local "diet" of worship is incomplete. I do not ask that we retain in our minds the picturesque symbolism by which the heavenly places were made to glitter before the eyes of our childhood. I ask only that we be faithful to the belief imbedded in the heart of the Christian faith that Jesus Christ "hath abolished death" and hath brought life and immortality to light, in such fashion that the life of Christian worshipers on earth is seen to be one continuous with the praises of the redeemed who live beyond death. The doxology which now is so widely used in our services, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow," contains in its third line a salutary reminder of the fact that the local body of vocal devotees is not alone in its worship: "Praise him above, ye heavenly host." I believe that public worship would be vastly enriched, especially in its power to minister comfort and the encouraging uplift of men's souls, if this thought that we are but a small part of a simultaneously worshiping host

within the heavenly gates, could be domesticated in our worship and made clear in its arrangement. And there is more than mere comfort in the thought of this vast co-operant fellowship in worship: and more even than confirmation of our faith in immortality. There may be spiritual and moral reenforcement. An honored friend of mine in England tells this authentic and significant story:

"In New Zealand the Lord's Supper was being celebrated. The first rank having knelt, a native rose up and returned to his seat, but again returned to the rank and knelt down. Being questioned, he said, 'When I went to the table I did not know whom I should have to kneel beside, when suddenly I saw by my side the man who a few years before slew my father and drank his blood, and whom I then devoted to death. Imagine what I felt when I suddenly found him by my side. A rush of feeling came over me that I could not endure, and I went back to my seat. But when I got there, I saw the Upper Sanctuary and the Great Supper and I thought I heard a voice saying, "By this shall all men know that ye are my dis-

ciples if ye love one another." That overpowered me. I sat down, and at once seemed to see another vision of a cross with a Man nailed to it; and I heard him say, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Then I returned to the altar.' "[1]

"I saw the Upper Sanctuary and the Great Supper." Here is a use of the General Assembly and Church of the First Born, of "the spirits of just men made perfect," *as instruments of powerful moral appeal,* a use which we are foolish to deny ourselves, if we do so either from fear of being thought other-worldly or somehow vaguely "Catholic." And in particular, if that last word scares us, it is time that we recognized the fact that that glorious liberating movement which we call the Reformation contained within itself no guarantee that it would in organizing itself contain *all* the devotional values which had grown up in the Catholic churches, both Latin and Greek. For these values, to-day, I believe we must make patient search, lest our lamps of devotion go quite out. And if we do, we shall find such interesting facts as that part of the

[1] P. J. Maclagan, D. Phil., *The Gospel and Its Working*, p. 82.

function of the Divine Liturgy in the Holy Orthodox Churches of the East is to represent here on earth the alleluias of the redeemed in heaven; to bring, that is to say, about the human worshiper who is so tempted to feel himself the prisoner of death and the victim of a gross disproportion between opportunity and capacity, and who can in his brief passage through life only carry a little flickering candle of devotion, to bring about him and his equally inhibited and incarcerated fellow-worshipers the glorious comfort and re-enforcement of conscious fellowship with the church radiantly triumphant in heaven. Some day Protestant prejudice will give way here. We shall slavishly copy nothing; but we shall find, by God's grace, *some* method consonant with his most holy will whereby we may be reminded when we worship that we have already potentially entered the eternal order in which God dwells, and in which he is surrounded by the myriads of the redeemed.

IV. Nature

And now may I try to say something

about the fourth dimension in which worship moves, namely, the world we call nature, the physical material order in which we live. Undoubtedly, a primitive conception of common worship was that it was a united effort to come into such a connection with the powers believed to reside in a world beyond that which we see, as to enable the worshipers to dominate nature and change their life from one of weakness to one of strength, in the physical sphere.

With the advance of thought, however, the physical sphere has receded from the life of prayer. Petitions tend to become confined to those whose answers can be realized in what is called the spiritual sphere: and the material sphere, it is held, cannot be affected by worship.

But when one considers the matter a little more closely this view seems to leave out of account some important considerations. We do not live our lives in two spheres—nature and spirit—that are mutually exclusive: but in one complex world. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the ideal man, lived in the same world, and showed himself master in both elements of that world. He was no more

Lord in the spiritual sphere than he was in the physical sphere. By no critical excision can we eliminate what is called the miraculous element from the Gospels. Cut and carve and "explain" as we will, there is left the record of a unique control over the forces of nature, sparingly and sometimes reluctantly employed, but always employed in the interest of the moral life of men and with perfect moral wisdom and selfless love. It is difficult to resist the belief that this control was a "premonition of the relation of man to nature in the perfected kingdom of God"; and certain features of the unique relation which our Lord sustained toward death—that terrible experience in which nature seems finally to crush mankind—appear to bear out this idea. The scriptural record bears witness to a "bodily" resurrection. I am not unaware of the difficulties surrounding this story for critical scholarship, and of course no one believes in the resurrection of the *flesh*. But is not the story, whether parabolical or not, true to the Hebrew conception of the self as one, of Nature (of which our body is the nearest part to us) as allied with mankind in destiny (see the prophets

passim), and to the idea that the ultimate kingdom of God will be not simply a fellowship of holy souls, but of holy souls in an embodiment, an environment (if that word be less offensive) which "will not interfere with the progressive continuance of the redeemed society"?

When the Puritan fathers, escaping from ecclesiastical tyranny, came first to America they came not that they might be free *in spirit;* but being *already* the subjects of an interior emancipation of the spirit, they came here that they might find an external environment worthy of that inner freedom, and giving it room in which to increase itself. So our minds respond to the idea that God is not only preparing our souls for higher achievements in the world to come, but that he is preparing a *place* for us, an environment that will aid and not hinder our spiritual advance.

Now, this is the thought which (under a misapprehension to the effect that spirituality demands contempt of material things) we have largely lost sight of in worship and life: so when we read of such proposals as those to which I referred in my first lecture

as being made by Pastor Rittelmeyer, of Stuttgart, to carry out a cultus which will have for its avowed object the spiritualization of matter, we feel as if we were listening to the ravings of lunacy.

And yet a glance at the history of Christian thought upon nature will show us that there is a balance of interest here to be recovered. As we have seen, the Lord's spiritual work did not disdain the physical realm; but even in his lifetime his kindliest works in the realm of the physical were objected to in the name of religion by religious persons who despised material things. Soon after our Lord's death the church was invaded by Gnostic philosophers who even denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, because "it was not fitting that the Highest should touch matter." Later still, monasticism was built on contempt and fear of God's natural world, and Puritanism both in the Protestant and Catholic camps carried on the evil tradition. Dean Sperry (who thinks this anti-nature bias may have been connected with the fact that, unlike our Lord, who was a man loving a rural life, the apostolic messengers were mainly con-

cerned with city life) puts the matter thus: "The metropolitan stamp which the apostolic and subapostolic ages put upon Christian thought persisted almost unchanged until the dawn of the Romantic movement in the early nineteenth century. With the possible exception of Saint Francis, whose childlike love and trust of all nature are an independent moral miracle in Christian history, the makers of Christian thought and Christian institutions seem to have drawn little suggestion or spiritual insight from the outer world."[1]

The return to the thought of the spiritual significance of nature is, then, a comparatively recent thing. Perhaps we should connect it chiefly in England with Wordsworth and the other Lake poets: and it has connections which we cannot here trace, with the wider rediscovery in the eighteenth century of the rights of the individual man. The nineteenth century was the period par excellence of unexampled strides on man's part toward a domination over the forces of nature, forces which he harnessed one by one to his uses, nor is his progress in conquest yet

[1] See *Religious Foundations*, Ed. Rufus M. Jones, p. 44.

arrested. But now men are beginning to be uneasy about this tremendous power which science and skill have put into their hands. They have seen that power, when used by an immoral temper, working unprecedented destruction; and they begin to feel that man, after all, will be conquered by nature, will become a victim to the very forces he has made his slave, unless moral and spiritual considerations intervene to prevent the disaster.

Hence men are beginning to grope *for a new interpretation of the connection of God with material things;* they are searching for a satisfying philosophy of the link between nature and spirit; they are almost feverishly searching in psychology, in physics, in biology for the final truth about the relation of mind and matter; and they are timidly, hesitatingly beginning to wonder if nature cannot somehow be restored to her place in worship.[1]

And this I honestly believe, not funda-

[1] May I here add my testimony to that of many others who have seen it to the impressiveness of the Altar of Heaven in Peking, and of the ritual of thanksgiving which the Emperor used to perform by his plowing a symbolical furrow to give expression to thanksgiving for God's gifts in nature?

mentally for æsthetic reasons. On the surface, the reintroduction of more ornate worship in more beautiful churches, the resort to decorative pageantry and so forth, may seem to have an æsthetic or even an unworthily sensuous origin. But I believe the origin of it all lies deeper: in a longing to give external expression to our need of a more sensitive conscience in the use of natural things, in a deep feeling that material things *must* be dedicated to holy uses or they will destroy us. When I have been in Belgium since the war, wandering over battlefields for the sake of intimately tender memories, I have wondered whether, apart altogether from the destruction of human life, we mortals have any right to scar the bosom of Mother Earth as that bosom is scarred in the dreary stretches around the ancient town of Ypres. Surely, a sensitization of the average conscience of men on the use of things —of the stuff of nature around us—is the next step to be sought in the moral advance of humanity.

Here, then, is an area of moral and spiritual interest in which surely worship fittingly moves. God is giving great power to

men in the realm of nature; yet the moral implicates of that power—its obligations and moral limits—are but imperfectly understood. What men will make of their power does not yet appear; yet it is evident that that power will benefit mankind only as those who exercise it remember that they are moral and spiritual beings with moral and spiritual ends to serve. Now, it is in common worship that, as a matter of fact, this aspect of life is most effectively recalled to men. Busy daily with *means,* they need to be recalled to *ends;* and worship recalls them from absorbing process to purpose and destiny. Can, then, public worship, in its organization and expression, afford to exclude nature? Does not the traditional aloofness of worship from nature—an aloofness so much cultivated in the supposed interest of a higher spirituality—impoverish the church's equipment in moral and spiritual appeal? Is not even the church's conception of God made narrow and jejune? The Hebrew Scriptures are full of the Lord's interest in *things*—in nature, in agriculture, in the arts by which men manipulate nature's forms and make them servants of his high-

est life. Where is all this in our Protestant worship? It was said of Michelangelo's work that, excellent as it is, it has never a blade of grass in it. May not the same be said of the molds of our public worship, that they are too exclusively occupied with the inner life and too much ignore our life among *things,* thus debauching and sophisticating men's consciences?

And is this not because the Protestant churches have no consistent philosophy of nature and of its relation to grace? We who are heirs of the Puritan tradition have taken over, as I have said above, from our forefathers (both Roman and Protestant) the idea that what is vaguely called nature must be *renounced,* in the interest of spirituality. We have, of course, revolted from the extreme forms of this renunciation as seen in some types of monasticism; but as far as I can make out we have not rationalized that revolt nor determined *the exact point at which the renunciation is to begin or end.* We have simply muddled along on a dim idea that nature—the sensuous, the beautiful, the symbolic—is not to be used *too much* in worship. Yet our churches have been

putting on expensive decoration reflecting the luxury and economic affluence of our time. That decoration could not perhaps until quite recently be called symbolic; but of late years the symbol has begun to be given a welcome, not very cordial perhaps but more tolerant than our fathers would have allowed. But we are still falling far short of tackling the problem and of discovering fundamental principles to guide us. Take a single illustration of our illogicality. We adorn our churches with huge expensive organs on the plea that they are needed to "enrich" the musical part of the service, though everybody knows that their tendency in most places is to diminish the part played by the voices of the whole congregation in the praise. These organs emphasize, sometimes blatantly, human ingenuity and the power of mechanism: and we often place them *in front of* the worshiper, as the most conspicuous object which he confronts and facing which he performs his devotions. What does this absurdity mean? It means that we admit nature, in manipulated shape, as an aid to worship; but we will not admit nor discuss the principle that sense percep-

tion—the contemplation of external objects —may and does intensify feeling and encourage particular attitudes. If we once admitted that principle, would we not place before our people, as they worship, objects not so much suggestive of human ingenuity as of the divine love? Would we not have to face the question whether we have not too hastily condemned praying "before" such symbols as an exercise of spiritual value? Here, surely, is something on which Protestant thought must clarify itself if it is to keep hold of the people in this age. We cannot go on maintaining forms and prejudices in public worship which we are not prepared philosophically to defend, and which certainly appear to run counter to the plainest statements of careful modern psychology.

Here, then, are the four dimensions—God, the individual worshiper, the worshiping group, and the world of nature—within which common worship operates.

We begin now to approach the subject of the worship of the future. Only first let us take a glance—it can be no more than that—at the history of Christian worship, for it

is by a sense of that history that our attempts to give to worship a completer and more effective external form can properly be regulated and controlled.

LECTURE IV

THE BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP OF TO-DAY

In dealing with this subject it is almost superfluous to say that I shall attempt no more than a retrospect upon some facts emerging from the history of worship which bear upon the problem of its organization for the needs of our time. The subject of the history of worship is, as you know, vast and recondite and in its entirety totally impossible of treatment here.

First of all, one ought, I think, to go back in thought to pre-Christian worship. "Prayer is older than history, and public prayer than private prayer." If you compare investigations of thoughtful men into the earliest traceable beginnings of organized worship you will note, I think, as relevant to our search, facts like these:

I. *Deeds preceded words as the staple of organized devotion.*

Socially useless and even loss-incurring acts were performed to secure satisfactory relations with the power or powers that lie outside man's vision. These acts were not necessarily nor always sacrificial, except in the sense of property-loss to the worshiper; I mean they were not necessarily gifts consciously offered to the god or gods. They were, however, ritual acts designed to secure ends not otherwise securable.

a. The "god" or "gods" (and worship apparently was addressed to all sorts of powers—spirits of dead persons, natural objects, etc—anything supposed to contain what Polynesians call "mana," and the New Testament "virtue") are regarded as amenable to control if the right methods are used. The will of the god is to be bent to the wills of the worshipers; the god is to be despised or even chastised if he does not yield. (One may, as well here as anywhere, remark that the history of worship has been the history of an evolution from this imperious treatment of the being worshiped—through the stage of bargaining with that power as with a commercial equal, on to the stage of submissive worship in which there is a recogni-

tion, surrounding all the acts of devotion, that the will of the God who is worshiped is just and honorable and good and loving—*and is that, before we pray.*)

b. As far as I can understand the matter, two emotions led all others in primitive worship; these were joy and fear. The joy was an exuberant feeling of delight in life, overrunning the limits of ordinary expression, and seeking by abnormal stimulation an abnormal mode of expressing itself. It is really a shame to use so Christian a term as "joy" to describe what evidently had not become even thankfulness, but was, rather, a sort of animal hilarity. The other leading emotion was fear—genuine apprehension because of the known capacity for destruction residing in the powers by whom man is surrounded, an apprehension which often deepened into terror.

The scholars speak of a deepening gloom attending worship as men's thoughts turned inward in criticism upon themselves. But that gloom and the reverence that accompanied it are later developments; at the first reverence was ruled out both by the hilarities and the fears of the worshipers.

c. I need hardly recall to you the next point, namely, that the whole transaction in early worship took place within the material realm: the "dominant idea in the ritual being that the material oblation afforded a physical satisfaction to the god," and that the dramatic acts produced material effects that were friendly to the wishes of the worshiper. The prayer of the primitive was "no meditation, but an intercourse with a living, present deity," about matters needing readjustment in the physical sphere.

d. And therefore as soon as one ritual act had been discovered or was thought to have proved itself successful, exactitude in the repetition of that ritual act came to be of the very essence of the worth of the worship. It is hard for us, even with contemporary instances about us of scrupulously correct performance of ritual offices, to realize how completely in some areas the idea of ritual exactitude covered the whole field of cultic obligation.

e. And, of course, that meant that in the early stages of organized worship, reflection upon inner experiences, the thought of the life of the spirit, is rare and elementary. In

prayer as in life it is true: "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Cor. 15, 46).

II. *How then did what we call spirituality emerge?*

The one element in the answer with which we shall here concern ourselves is that what we call spirituality, or the interior quality in worship, must have been greatly aided by the use of *words* in worship. Now, I do not mean that we have evidence of anything so absurd as that primitive organized religion was merely dumb show, unaccompanied by cries endlessly repeated, cries containing the essential idea of "Lord, have mercy upon us." But what is clear is that the act was more important than the rational word; for, of course, words irrationally spoken and repeated are simply mechanical, physical deeds.

But there came a time, which we cannot date, when the word began to pass the deed in importance. I have said we cannot date the period. Yet in the story of the organized worship of Israel (which so greatly concerns us as Christians because, as Paul in

Rom. 9. 4 reminds us, it is to Israel we owe the outline of organized worship), in Israel there was a time when religious leaders openly advocated that men should take with them words, and render the "calves," not of the stall, but of their lips. See Hosea 14. 2.

That epoch was the period of the exile to Babylon (sixth century B. C.) when the Hebrew people, long accustomed to worship with the aid of ornate instruments of worship, were compelled to do without these material aids and either abandon their religion altogether or give it an expression more independent of things. The men of keenest insight in the nation saw that that discipline of exile would divide the people, sifting out the less worthy elements of their religion. Jeremiah proclaimed the locus of religion to be in the heart, and Hosea bade the people betake themselves to repentance and to the sacrifice of the contrite heart. That is the period in which prayer and praise both in the name of the nation and of the individual burgeoned into unexampled richness of expression, in lyrics, of which we still possess great treasures in the book of Psalms. It is the period when prayer seems to have be-

come, if I dare use the expression, the habit of the common man, become more conscious of himself and of the significance of his individuality, as the monarchical powers that had been over him disappeared in the wreck of war: "the death of the state" (as the late Professor A. B. Davidson tersely put it) "having become the birth of the individual."

And with astonishing suddenness, as though a long pent-up stream had been released, the riches of spiritual experience were poured out in the Psalms, and in later and less well-known devotional writing. The spiritual experience, it is true, was not perfect (for that matter, neither is ours today); all the areas of men's moral nature had not been searched out by the candle of the Lord (nor are they searched out yet); but in one essential thing worship advanced by leaps and bounds through the experience of the exile and its turning inward of the thoughts of men: Israel henceforth was done with idols, and with the multiplicity of gods, and thenceforth was to worship with ardent and sometimes almost fanatic tenacity the God who sitteth on the circle of the earth, beside whom there is no God. This, then,

was the period when conspicuously *words* began to replace *deeds* at the center of the organized worship of the people.

When the remnant of the Hebrews returned from the exile to Palestine to reconstruct there a theocratic state (although with only a shadow of their former political greatness) the Temple was rebuilt and its stately worship restored according to ancient forms. Scrupulosity in the observance of these forms seems only to have been made more intense among the ritualistically inclined. But throughout the country the free synagogal gatherings which had apparently grown into power during the exile (though their origin may well go back to the days of Ahaz), with their independence of material sacrifice and relative freedom even from liturgical forms, were apparently steadily maintained; and in our Lord's time both types of organized worship went on side by side without rivalry or antagonism. Our Lord himself attended both institutions of worship—the Temple with its stately ritual and ordered festivals, and the local synagogue with its air of informal conference,

its emphasis on study of the law and on free prayer—and the two types, the one objective, dramatic, and, if I may coin the word, "representational," the other interior, reflective, and intellectually vocal—have been characteristic, with varying emphases, of organized Christianity ever since.

Beyond the fact that our Lord attended *both* institutions of worship and that he both prescribed to his disciples a liturgical form of prayer ("When ye pray, *say,* Our Father") and himself practised the utmost freedom in prayer, we cannot draw from his example any indication of his will as to forms and outward organization of worship. (It is only one of the many places where the example of our Lord in details of behavior fails us.) His church at the first did not desert the Temple worship, nor fail to pay reverence to its cultic discipline. But its own meetings for united prayer (apart from the fact that the expansion of the church into new areas and the newer conception of God made a central place of worship an obsolete idea) took on a new glow of joyous fervor because of the glorification of the church's Lord and his living presence in the

heavenly places. Grace was felt to proceed from him as from the Father (1 Thess. 1. 1): thanksgiving was the breath of the church's life and was enriched by being made "by" him and in his name, for he himself had so tremendously added by his life and death to the church's felt obligation to God. Even what we should call providential guidance was associated (1 Thess. 3. 11) with our Lord's presence in the unseen directing the affairs of his church. And most notable of all was the enormous impulse given to *intercession* by the new mutual solicitude which was the direct outcome among Christian folk of that love of God which was in Christ Jesus our Lord. No finer utterances of the human spirit anywhere exist, and nowhere has the human spirit risen to greater heights of unselfish, pure affection than in the intercessory prayers that have come down to us from the early church, notably from the tongue and pen of the apostle Paul.

One further remark: In thrusting our imagination back to the early days of the church we must never fail to take into account that disturbance of the equilibrium of the minds of men which resulted (as it has

often resulted since) from the sudden crashing in upon the human consciousness of the lofty ideals of Christ. That disturbance often resulted in temporary heightening of powers of expression, and this was known as "exercising spiritual gifts," "speaking with tongues," and "prophecy." The new faculty must have proved in many cases conducive to edification; and yet it is obvious even from so early a period as the fifties and sixties of the first century that regulation of the use of this fervid excitement of faculty was desirable, and whether we accept the Pastoral Epistles as Pauline or not, they give abundant evidence that leaders of the church were concerned about the orderliness and comprehensiveness of the public prayers, notably the prayers of intercession. When the author of First Timothy says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority," he is obviously constructing, as we should say, a liturgical rubric for the express purpose of bringing in seemly order and seemly comprehensiveness and seemly expression into public

prayers, which might be in danger of becoming narrow or violent or unbalanced under the pressure of unregulated fervor. The fear of formalism arising from the ordered expression of public prayer was at least not an obsession in the early church, and when examination is made of liturgical forms known to have been early in use, it becomes increasingly evident that the church leaned back on pre-Christian experience, on the synagogal prayer life in ancient Israel, for some of the synagogal forms live on in sublimated form in Christian prayers.

Ritual acts were in the early church reduced to a minimum—a bath and a meal; the first to signalize the entry of a novice into the organized church, the other to maintain and confirm the fellowship of Christians with one another and their Lord. These ritual acts were aids to rather than acts of worship, if the distinction be permissible; but they were plainly occasions when in a very striking degree the ends of worship were realized. The bath of baptism does not concern us here so much as the meal of the Eucharist, for, though of communal significance, the case of the baptism of the eunuch

by Philip, if it be authentic, seems to indicate that the presence of the church was not always considered necessary. Saint Paul, who did not himself baptize often, gives the ceremony a certain representational or dramatic value, as portraying by vivid symbolism the spiritual change it signalized.

The Eucharist, however, was very distinctly an affair of the whole body of the church: the church itself and (at the first) neither priest nor individual communicant, was the true celebrant and this ritual communal act of thanksgiving, commemoration, renewal of covenant with other Christians and with Christ was destined to affect Christian worship as no other act or thought of the church.

It is not my purpose to trace the story—the unspeakably sad story—of the development of this beautiful and simple "gesture of solidarity" into a tremendous instrument of division and retardation of the church's life. Two points only I emphasize:

1. Social conditions, the facts of the relation of the church to the pagan state, compelled the celebration of the Eucharist to be within closed doors. That fact led most un-

fortunately to a separation of two parts of a public service which was originally essentially a unity. The first part consisted of the singing of praises, the use of prayer, the reading of Scripture, and the exhortation to the people. That part served itself very directly heir to the ancient synagogal exercises in which the educative, intellectual, rational element was uppermost.

But this first part of the service, which came to be called the catechumens service (*"missa catechumenorum"*), was followed by a service held in private from which the pagan outside and those not yet prepared to assume the full responsibilities of Christian membership were excluded.

In this part of the service *"missa fidelium"* the utterances in prayer and thanksgiving appear to have been regulated from a fairly early period. The service was mainly a thanksgiving, was "representational," and at its heart there was an offering, a sacrifice element, in the beginning connecting itself with the gifts of God in nature, which (perhaps at first actually present in considerable abundance as part of the ministration to the poor) came to be symbolized by the bread

and the wine: but later associating itself with Christ's body and blood offered as a sacrifice for men. The supreme moment of a ritual act of this kind would be markedly significant *action* performed in silence. It was thus more the heir of the Temple type of worship.

2. And that fact leads me to the only other comment I shall make. Christian worship was destined to gather up into itself elements that had been in worship from the beginning —*ritual acts* performed in a silence of awe or thanksgiving or penitence; *representation* of epic facts pertaining to the drama of the relations of God with men; and *sacrifice,* the instinct of self-commitment, in order that, emptied of all that is not God that has filled one's life, one may receive the fullness of life from him: and all this enriched by the subjective worship of devout thought and feeling and words spoken or sung.

Of this so varied and so splendid devotional heritage we stand to-day the recipients and the trustees. As we look back upon the story, with its record of cultic transitions from nature to spirit, from costly deeds

to rational word, from magical spell to submissive prayer, from dramatic representation to interior reflection, and have seen how elements that at the first seemed too subrational to survive (silence, dramatic recapitulation of facts by symbol, and even sacrifice itself) have reappeared clothed in more spiritual power and cleansed of debasing elements—as we look on all this we begin to see clearly the simple but profound truth that organized worship is in the grip of an evolutionary process and its final forms have not yet been reached.

Here and there (less frequently as yet in America than in Europe)[1] one meets and hears of men and women (notably but not exclusively among the young) who are cherishing dreams of an *inclusive form of worship which shall be a synthesis of the types which have been seen at work in pre-Christian and Christian history:* which will despise nothing that God has made, will use for his

[1] Compare I. Vernon Bartlet (in his article on "Worship," E. R. E., xii, 776). "Men conceive of a Catholic worship, within a reunited Church communion, that shall be inclusive of the genius and the more essential methods of 'Catholicism' and 'Evangelicalism,' whether in Orthodox, Roman, or Protestant circles."

glory all that he has made, and all relevant powers of men in art and science, in the love of beauty, of splendor, of ordered dignity, of calm, of simplicity, of peace; and all, not that the childlike upward look and gesture of the individual spirit be thwarted but that it be released, and that God and the heart of men may more fully meet, every aspect of life made holy and golden by his divine touch.

Can we at all contribute to a consummation like this?

LECTURE V

THE WORSHIP OF TO-MORROW

Our subject is the "Worship (that is, the public, organized worship) of the future."

But first—*will there be any?* Obviously not, unless serious minds continue to believe in worship and to interest themselves in its effective perpetuation.

Now, it is unmistakable that in our day there is a widespread abstention from public worship by thoughtful persons. That abstention is a serious matter. That frivolous and volatile minds, in a time when enormous masses of information are accessible to persons not always capable of baking and pounding them into knowledge, should throw off the yoke of an obligation at the heart of which is a call to serious thought—that is to be expected, and need not alarm us. But it is a grave matter when sincere and thoughtful men, out of the very honesty which their pursuits require and foster, withdraw, saddened and tired, from a worship

which still remains the chief consolation of the unthinking masses of mankind, but which to the thoughtful has ceased to have meaning or value. A widespread schism between thought and worship is a development which no lover of his kind can look upon without anxiety.

The type of mind of which I am thinking, often reasons thus: "Why should I worship, especially with others and lose my individuality? If my moral life is vigorous, why should it find expression in the absurdities of an address to an unseen Person? When I find myself in need of moral stimulus, I find it is best to seek it obliquely, where it will not minister to my self-consciousness, namely, in the discipline of work. If I want stimulus outside of myself, I find it in fellowship with strenuous minds or in the contemplation of the great worker—Nature. We do not know enough of God to know how to approach him: no two of us have the same idea of God and of his wishes; and that must be futile in which no two men can agree. What we can believe about God, further, is hostile to the idea that he can delight in homage. There is something igno-

ble in the suggestion that he delights in praise; it is as if we had predicated vanity of the Supreme. The truth is, formal worship is a relic of the spirit of the days when notions of feudal and tribal homage invaded religion, and developed the idea of an exacting Lord God, demanding the stated acknowledgment of human vassalage. We have advanced now to more spiritual conceptions. Goodness must be everywhere one and the same. If there be a God, goodness must be that in him which it is in man; namely, reverence for that which is beneath it. Worship was no doubt once a helpful parable of the idea of devotion to what is good, to the highest we know. Now the idea of the parable is best realized when we go out in strenuous service to find and disinter the highest both in nature and in man." "It simply means," says many an embittered man to-day, "degeneration of moral tissue for a man habitually to join with others in trafficking in the superlatives of the devotional dialect, to repeat protestations of an unfelt penitence, to plunge into artificial abjectness, to use in hymn and prayer words that are above the level of one's own emo-

tional appropriation, to confirm oneself in positions one has never satisfactorily examined: to indulge in an unhealthy publicity (veiled though it be) regarding processes whose sanctity more than half depends upon their secrecy. Whatever private worship may be, public worship at least is an habitual vulgarization of the Holy of Holies of moral regret and resolve."

This attitude (especially without the bitterness) is present in a good many lives today, especially the idea that social service is more acceptable to God than intransitive worship. In an account I recently read of a statement of accord drawn up between representative English Jews and a committee of a Christian church, I found this sentence: "We agree that man is a spiritual being, and that the worship acceptable to God is the service of our fellow men." As it stands, is that statement true? It may seem to be supported by passages like the first chapter of Isaiah where, in the name of God, the prophet fulminates against hypocritical worship and urges social justice in its place. Compare Wisd. Sir. 35. 2: "He that requiteth a good turn, offereth fine flour: and he

that giveth alms sacrificeth praise." Compare also James 1. 27, where the word translated "religion" means devotion expressed in devout acts.

But the obvious answer to all this is that we human beings are so constituted that we *must* express our feelings, whether it be of desire or appreciation or sense of failure, and we *must* direct that expression toward the power which represents the home of our desire or of our obligation. In crises, all men pray, and prayer suppressed is faculty unreleased. And though difficulties abound in connection with the subject of petition individual or corporate, this is no release from the obligation of thanksgiving or expression of our dependent state. Whatever worship forms may come to an end, thanksgiving must endure. "One day," said Rabbi Menahem, "all sacrifices will cease; only the thank-offering will not cease: all prayers will cease; only the thanksgiving prayer will not cease."[1]

Organized worship, then, will go on; and if the spirit of our time, with its glorification of technique, persists, the organization is not

[1] Quoted by V. Bartlet, E. R. E., xii, 763.

likely to be less but rather more complex than hitherto. Can we guess what principles are likely to govern that organization? Beyond principles I do not go. Every man's guess in the region will, of course, be a veiled wish or foreboding as the case may be: I offer my guesses simply as deductions from my belief in God, and from what review I have been enabled to make of the history of and trend of devotional ideas.

1. First of all I trust the worship of the future will have at its heart a more adequate conception of God. As I ventured to remind you in an earlier lecture, the conception of God is not in stable equilibrium among us but varies with the experience possessed and interpreted by the individual thinker on God. In recent times vast and variegated areas of life have "swum into the ken" of the average man, and I fear relatively few have expanded their idea of God to cover that variegated area. God has been, and is to very many, supremely concerned in ecclesiastical institutions and exercises. It would not, of course, be denied by those who so limit him that he has authority over every

branch of human activity. But in practice his main interests are apt to be localized in his house the church, and in the thoughts and exercises of people accustomed to life within the ecclesiastical area. This limitation has undoubtedly led to restriction to one type of worshipful ideas and symbolisms; but unless I am much mistaken, there are hopeful signs of a tendency to regard all legitimate and useful interests as something to be dedicated to God and to call for his blessing. I would not for the world disturb the centrality to all worship of the individual soul's converse with the God on the subject of moral conduct and of devotional communion and of the issues of life. But I welcome, as I hope you do, every sign that men are beginning to feel that God our Father loveth *all* that he hath made and is interested in *all* our work and in *all* our play. I feel sure that coming generations will delight to place in their churches, and thus to use as aids to devotion, symbols of the interest of God in science (for example, in agriculture), in arts, in multiform beneficence, and in clean sport. The placing of a sports window in the Cathedral of Saint John the Di-

vine in New York illustrates what I mean. For far too many centuries the one extra-ecclesiastical interest, if it be right to call it that, which our great cathedrals associated with God was the art of war: and as we all know, the art and dread of war have thrown a sinister color over the otherwise so beautiful Anglican Prayer Book: and one *hopes* that the link between the two ideas—God and war—was the worthy link of sacrifice, and not the unworthy one of rejoicing over the fall of an enemy. But if the art of war has by traditional consent its place in the symbolism tolerated within the church, why not the beneficent arts of peace? Can you answer the question, "What is the flag to God?"

In some way the worship of the future will represent and address itself to a God of de-provincialized interest, his claims and re-enforcements coextensive with life itself.

2. I cannot but hope and believe that the worship of the future in Protestant churches will be recognized as an outgoing not of our intellect only but of our whole nature—intellectual, emotional, and volitional.

Straining the meaning of the word "reasonable" in the phrase "reasonable worship" or "service" (Rom. 12. 1), we have, I think it is fair to say, over-intellectualized our worship, making it an exercise for thinking persons, persons presumed to be adult, intelligent, and in a state of health permitting continuous attention of the mind. A moment's thought will show us how inexact is that description of what, as a matter of fact, many worshipers are. To begin with, they are often not adult, nor of adult mentality. In many churches this is recognized, and an effort is made to provide features of worship suitable to children. But until the able researches now being conducted into child nature and the adaptation of worship-forms to child and adolescent life have reached enduring conclusions and been presented to the church in usable form, we shall not know how to modify worship to suit the subnormal intelligence. In the meantime it will be something if we recognize that intellectualism alone will not do. "Go into a Protestant church of a Sunday morning," said a ribald writer recently in the daily press (New York Herald, January 25,

1925) "and you have no idea what is going to happen to you. All that you can be sure of, especially in the country, is that one of your fellow citizens is going to argue with you at great length." Surely, that state of things must be superseded by a better. Are there not states of mind and states of bodily health to which "deep talk" is inappropriate? For religion cannot, without infinite damage to the Church of God, be identified with the reasoned and the articulate: there is a "remainder of the ineffable" that must be legislated for. This is why we will have to keep in view the fact that the worthy stimulation of feeling must find its place in worship. Protestants when traveling steal into cathedrals and beautiful churches, not always to sightsee, but often for devotional refreshment. And then they return comforted to their own repellent churches. I said they "steal" into cathedrals. The word is significant. Protestants have been surreptitious in their theft of emotional stimuli, and have failed to amend their own ways in directions which would make the theft unnecessary. If it be found to be a psychological law that "the eye affects the heart,"

this will frankly be recognized in the surrounding worship by stimulating symbolism.

On the other hand, I cannot but feel that one outcome of the present-day robust sense for reality will be that the *will* will be ministered to in more definite and less dangerous ways than at present. Worship must always turn upon the twin pivots of sacrifice and appropriation. Now, the word "sacrifice" must be taken seriously, and in the realm of reality; and there must be as parts of worship corporate acts which do not "neutralize the sacrificial impulse," as, for example, the perfunctory monetary offering undoubtedly tends to do. One is glad to note the beginnings here and there of a reaction against the pompous emphasis made upon a monetary offering of a routine sort. In the church of the future I venture to hope that while collections of money will continue, offerings of other forms of human service, especially of personal service in dealing with individuals and with social situations, will find their place. The tyranny of forms at present in vogue must not imprison our imagination or our will in envisaging such a taking seriously of the act of sacrifice.

3. With all my heart I trust the worship of the future will return to the *gladness* of early Christian worship, and to the use of everything that wisely ministers to Christian joy. The worship of the early Christians centered in "Eucharistic," in happy (not to say hilarious—the word hilarious is actually applied to the grace of the Holy Ghost) thanksgiving and joy, because of the greatness of the redemption that had come in Jesus Christ. "Behold," said the angel, "I bring you glad tidings of great joy—I evangelize to you a great gladness, which shall be to the whole people." The Christian Church at the first believed this. They had experienced the truth of the saying, "Behold, I make all things new." There had come to them a new thought of God, a new solicitude for one another, a new and glorious hope. The undertone of feeling for the tragedy of life is not wanting, they were conscious of a new shame that blushed and burned within them, and spurred them as a fire to the purification of the life within and around. But the overtone was of sustained joy. (And not, mark you, solely grateful joy for spiritual gifts. In the earliest man-

ual that we possess giving directions for the celebration of the Lord's Supper the thanksgiving is first given for the bread and wine not only as representing spiritual gifts but also as bread and wine, that is, as examples of God's bounty to us in nature. "Thou, O Almighty Sovereign, didst create all things for thy name's sake, and thou gavest both food and drink to men for their enjoyment, that they might thank thee; but to us thou freely gavest spiritual food and drink and life everlasting through thy Son.")

How has this note of happy joy been supplanted by the note of somber pathos—of gentle, complaining plaintiveness which Matthew Arnold criticized? Not, I believe, through any deeper sense of sin, but because of an evil inheritance from the Roman Church and its monasticism, and from Calvin and his stern disciplinary legalism; a forbidding conception of God and a feeling of alienation from and contempt of nature. The forbidding conception of God has begun to go (and, indeed, the thought of his Fatherhood replaced through close attention to the teachings of Jesus is itself in need of re-enforcement by elements of strength and

awe which in Jesus' mind it did not lack). But while the conception of God has been, if I dare say, so brightened and the forbidding shadow made to pass from the face we must one day look upon, no such complete change of thought in connection with nature has yet penetrated the Protestant churches. Thank God the services for children are brightened by various arts. But there is an atavism in us adults, a monastic and joy-shunning atavism, striving restlessly, that makes us dread to introduce into the church the music, the pictures, the bright color which are finding an increasing place in the Sunday-school room. Why are we afraid of bright color and of the accent of joy, ministered to by the resources of nature? Because we have no consistent philosophy, interpretation, of nature and our relation to it; and any deviation from barrenness, from dullness, from the somber is fought off as an enemy of spirituality. Test it on yourself. If I suggest that we should use incense in worship, do you notice how shocked and horrified you are, without knowing why? Of course you would answer that you do know why—that it is a practice existing in the Ro-

man and High Anglican Churches and hostile to spirituality of worship. Are you sure of that? Have you always found sweet odors distracting from the thought of Him who "perfumes every rose in our gardens"? You see it is when you are taken back to nature that the difficulty appears. We are not sure that nature ministers, or can be made to minister, to spirituality. We hanker after the idea that then only are we spiritual when we forget nature—as if the God of redemption and the God of creation were two different gods.

If this illustration of incense is offensive and trivial, let me read you something from a man whose name in scholarship is world-resounding, the late Dr. Franz Delitzsch of Leipsic. Doctor Delitzsch once wrote an entrancing essay entitled "Black and White."[1] In this essay he discusses the question of the color of the official dress of the ministers of the church. That official dress, he says, was white from the first; as were all liturgical vestments. In the Koran the apostles are called the White Ones. The

[1] In *Iris: Studies in Colour and Talks About Flowers.* Leipsic, 1888.

German reformers, unlike the Swiss, recognized the seemliness of distinguishing between the secular dress and the official vestments of their ministers. But they introduced black, which had never been a liturgical dress. Black, says Delitzsch, stands for everything that Christianity is not: for death, the keeping up of esoteric mystery; for death and condemnation, for trouble and mourning; in every respect in contradiction to the essential character of the New Testament religion and of the gospel ministry. For white worn over black, Delitzsch finds symbolic meaning, namely, that though the minister has died to the world and its pleasures as servant in the spiritual world, he lives and walks in the light of God. For black alone he finds "no meaning corresponding to the nature of Christianity."

Does all this make you impatient? It is a little dangerous to be contemptuous of Franz Delitzsch. There is such a thing as a premature seizure in religion of an adulthood which we have not earned. We suppose ourselves too often to have outgrown these simple symbolisms. Jesus warned us about this matter of being grown up: "Ex-

cept ye . . . become as little children," he said, "ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

The truth is, this assumption of spiritual superiority to symbolism provided by nature's colors, stuffs, odors, and sounds, is really unimpressive; for it is founded on nothing better than the lack of a brave and courageous and consistent interpretation of the good of the world God made, of which we are ourselves a part. The worship of the future will be made over in terms of that interpretation when we have found it and can follow it. And in that day it will be found that the God of beauty is not the enemy of the God of piety: and that splendor may be a function of awe, and spontaneity and joy express themselves fittingly in the happy use of the golden glories of God's good world. If comfortable bourgeois Protestantism sniffs at all this from the eminence of its intellectual ease, the industrial thrall whose personality is depressed, whose love of beauty is starved, who is robbed of sunshine and of the sight of clear flowers and green grass by the tyrannies of the factory and the mine, he at least will appreciate the frank

acceptance by the Christian Church of all ancillary support from the beauty of the earth for the setting forth before the Lord of the sacrifice of praise.

4. It is to look at this matter from another angle to say that surely the worship of the future, grateful for the use of words, will yet from time to time "break through language and escape" from the tyranny of articulate speech. For "the language of words always halts behind the inner secret of Christianity" (L. P. Jacks). Words do help vastly to utter and release the moods of the spirit: yet, like rain at a low temperature, they freeze as they fall, and living souls must sometimes let them lie and do without them. There are reaches of adoration, of thanksgiving, of love, of shame, of expectation, where words are impotent and even irrelevant, for we confront at those moments and in those areas the Ineffable in God that saves. I confidently pray that the worship of the future will re-establish in a central place a sacramental silence, as a means of correcting the inadequacy of speech, in the spirit of the psalmist, who said, "My soul, be thou si-

lent unto God." May there not be a connection between the loose, unclimaxed desultoriness of our church worship and its unpunctuated and hectic garrulity?

We complain sometimes of the poverty of the language used by those who conduct our worship; but is not silence the obverse side of elevated diction, and has not the habit of silence made possible the sweet grace of the classical speech of the Society of Friends?

5. It goes without saying that somehow our Protestant churches must be *internationalized.* They certainly are not so now. A little while ago a young American friend of mine, with ample academic qualifications and a fine record of service, sought formal admission to the Church in Scotland as a minister. "Can we admit him," said a member of the Presbytery of this nonestablished church, "when he is not a British subject?" The mere putting of the question indicates how far Protestant churches have left behind them the dream of an international, inter-racial, in that sense truly catholic society of devotion. But must this condition always remain? A world is upon us which is spa-

tially collapsed but linguistically diverse. God has decreed that in that world the generations succeeding ours shall live. Are these people to be without any medium of common devotion, any device whereby there may be brought about them as they worship in different lands, and many tongues, a sense of their common fellowship in aspiration with persons remote from them in minor tradition, but one with them in their eager quest for God and their discovery of him in Jesus Christ?

You ask, "How will you conquer the difficulty of language?" I do not quite know; but before we pronounce the problem insoluble let us go back to the idea of the climax of public corporate worship. That we have seen should be in a common act of self-oblation, self-surrender to the purposes of God. Now, what act can we suppose would be most stimulative of this mood of self-oblation? Surely, some reminder of His sacrifice on whom our hopes are set and from whom we draw the power of consecrated living. What shall the reminder be? The answer is inevitable: Some ritual act of a representational sort, gathering itself about the

cross of Christ and his sacrificial self-offering there.

It is impossible at this point not to recall the immense power of the supreme moment in the Mass when the fact of the sacrificial Incarnation of God the Son is represented to the people. In a lesser degree what I believe Lutherans call the altar service, the passing of the minister to the altar to receive and present the people's offerings and to offer final prayers and benediction, answers well to the idea of climax. But I can think of nothing in our non-Episcopal churches which quite yields this result. Why should not the minister and choir who have been surely prominent enough in the earlier part of the service, now turn and join with the people, and *facing the altar,* in a unison of silence and of carefully chosen prayers, lead the congregation in a common act of self-oblation to God?

You observe I say, "facing the altar." I believe the altar of sacrifice should be restored in all churches as the chief object confronting the people. I believe the time has come when the people ought to cease to "offer their devotion to the serried ranks of

gilded organ pipes."[1] I know that Protestantism has flourished by the singing of the word as well as by its preaching. But organ music is not singing—it is mechanical delegation of singing. The organ is a mechanical aid to praise: and it is thoroughly characteristic of an age proud of mechanical genius that organs are placed not in a rear gallery or modestly at the side of the church but that their mechanism should be flaunted right in front of the people in a place which should surely be occupied by some object more stimulative of the spirit of devotion, which the cultus is designed to assist. On the other hand, has not the time come when in the interests of truth, reunion, and obedience to recognized laws of psychology there should be placed before the eyes of the people the time-honored and so reticent and dignified symbol of sacrifice—the altar—gathering up into itself as no other symbol could do the whole history of religion?

Around that altar-center, then, should gather the ritual in which worship everywhere should find its climax. And if, again,

[1] J. R. Scotford, "The Eye, the Ear and Religion." *Christian Century*, November 18, 1926.

there comes the difficulty, "What about language?" I reply that while the earlier part of the service should of course be in the language "understanded of the people," the discovery of some universally understood medium of expression for this Ritual of Oblation should not be beyond the powers of concerted Christian thought. For see; already there is something of the kind in existence. Suppose I were a Polish Jew with little or no knowledge of English. If I should go into Rabbi Wise's congregation in Carnegie Hall I would not understand, it may be, a word of the earlier part of the service. But when the people rise to the Adoration of the Holy Unity or for the Kaddisch, how my heart would be warmed as I heard again the formula first in the sonorous Hebrew I had known in the old Schule in Poland! After that I could at least tolerate the English translation. Is Protestantism really impotent to accomplish something of this kind? Has the nationalism which cursed the Reformation meant a permanent imprisonment of Protestantism within nationalistic walls? May I make a single personal reference here? It happens that serv-

ing in my household are two good girls—one a Polish stranger to this land and one an Irish girl from Jersey City. Both came recently as complete strangers to the little town in which I live. I confess to envying these girls as I saw them go off together to Mass. I began to regard with more respect than I formerly did the rigorous order of the Roman Church restricting the saying of Mass to the Latin tongue. For here were these two girls finding a common medium of fellowship in the language both could "understand." I tested the matter thus. On their return I asked the Polish girl to submit to a little examination.

"Yanina, what is 'Dominus vobiscum'?"

"'De Lord be veet you,' Doctor."

"What is 'Et cum spiritu tuo'?"

"'And veet dy speereet.'"

"What is 'Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi'?"

"Oh, Doctor, I no can say it in English. Vait a meenit. It is dis: 'O Lamb von Gott what takes avay de seen of de vorld.'"

"Yanina, do you know any Latin?"

"What? Me? Oh, no, Doctor."

My point in giving this story is that we

make too large assumptions when we suppose that the learning of a whole language is necessary for the securing of an adequate amount of common apprehension of what is going on in a given piece of ritual. We don't know yet what is the unit of comprehension or the unit of expression for the adult. We are but at the beginnings of international and interlingual communication. The dots and dashes of the early stages of wireless have given way to long-distance speech over the radio: what comes next? We are but at the alphabetic stage of communication in a contracted world: who knows what the full means of intercommunication will be in the next generation?

Meanwhile, though I be laughed at now for the suggestion, I plead for the beginnings of attempts to set up a supernational, superlingual and superdenominational form of service for the expression and stimulation of that movement of the collective human soul in self-oblation which is the central response to the great objective fact of Divine Grace. And one day, the prejudices and arrogances of our overintellectualized and overnationalized churches notwithstand-

ing, appropriate expression, *usable everywhere,* will be found for both these aspects —inspiration and aspiration—of that great saving mystery, the Divine Life in man.

6. One final word. It is in no perfunctory spirit but because of my honest and burning faith that I express my belief that the worship of the future will be effective only as the hearts of the people are turned once again to the cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The thinness and inadequacy of public worship which all of us have felt is not unconnected with the chilling influences of rationalistic ways of thought, with a verbalist neoliteralist emphasis on Jesus' teaching and example, with sociological and psychological interpretations that obscure the vital center of the Christian Faith. That vital center—alike as ground of salvation and of ethical stimulus—from the first has been Christ's death and resurrection, and the church's sense of infinite obligation to the Son of God in death and glory. That sense of obligation runs through the hymns of adoration that come down to us from the New Testament:

where the deepest note is not discipleship but debtorship. "Unto him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom, priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." This note of adoring indebtedness to an Infinite Sacrifice and an Infinite Love runs down the ages, an "imperial vein of Christian experience." The self-sacrificing Christ has haunted men and made their theology cruci-centric:

> "I gave my flesh, I gave my blood.
> I laid me down upon the Rood,
> And from my side there ran a flood.
> I tholed it all in mildest mood.
> Man! it was all for thee."[1]

The intellect of the church will, I believe, after a little time has passed, return upon and rest in the divine philosophy of the cross: and as it does so, the devotion of the church will also find its organizing center there.

[1] I have ventured slightly to alter spelling and rhythm. The stanza is printed thus in Dr. Carleton Brown's *Religious Lyrics of the 14th Century:*

> "I gaf mi fles, I gaf my blod
> For thee me let I down on rod,
> Out of my side ern the flood
> I tholed it all with milde mod,
> Man—it was all for thy good."

DATE DUE

BV 10 .R677 1927

Ross, George Alexander
Johnston, 1865-1937.

Christian worship and its
future

BONEBRAKE SEMINARY LIBRARY

United Theological Seminary Library
MAIN BV10.R677 1927
Ross, George Christian worship and its
3 0645 0002 5168 2